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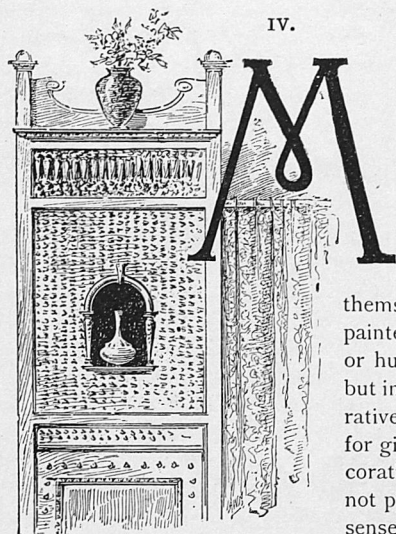
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THE HOUSE

HOME DECORATION AND FURNITURE.

IV.



ANY are the opportunities offered in the houses of to-day for the display of decorative art; not alone upon the walls themselves — whether painted and stencilled or hung with paper—but in the special decorative paintings made for given spaces. Decorative paintings are not pictures in the true sense of the word, because they only profess

to supply form or color for some given position, in which the more carefully studied picture would suffer through lack or excess of light.

This subject is now receiving much attention from artists of standing, and it may not be amiss to point out a few instances where pure decorative painting will materially increase the beauty of the apartment in which it is placed. Such work, well conceived, and colored in accord with its surroundings, may be most desirable, but, as with every artistic conception, study is necessary, and without it the painting will fail to charm both as to composition and harmony.

The decorative painter has a broad field to work in

bring within bounds the forms and colors of nature?" These and many similar considerations must be encountered and passed upon before the work is undertaken.

Unfortunately for the amateur, who finds it amusing to paint a bunch of tulips or a branch of dogwood, the best decorative art is that which employs principally conventionalized forms. That is to say, before we can use successfully, the wealth a bounteous nature has bestowed upon us we must have some knowledge and have made some study of composition.

The Egyptians used the exquisitely colored lotus flower and the tall, slender papyrus in a thoroughly conventional manner. The Greeks made use of the honeysuckle, and the Romans the acanthus in much the same way. Instances might be multiplied to prove that in the best period of art the conventional took precedence of the naturalistic in decoration. I do not intend to say that paintings of flowers are bad art. Quite the contrary; but they are pictures, just as paintings of landscape or figures are, and should be treated as such. A picture, i.e., a naturalistic representation of a flower, must be the work of a genius to gain great praise, and unless it be at least a painstaking study it has no raison d'être at all. As soon, however, as we conventionalize, our work is viewed from a different standpoint, for we merely try to represent those qualities of the flower that the limitations of the material, the position, etc., allow, and do not attempt that which it would be impossible for an unskilled hand to accomplish successfully. To illustrate: The two panels given herewith show two methods of treating the same plant and flower form. The first is sketched in with a free hand and indicates no special thought beyond the limits of the surface to be covered. Its beauty would depend principally upon the skill with which it is colored and the plant imitated. If it be a masterly bit of flower-painting it deserves the

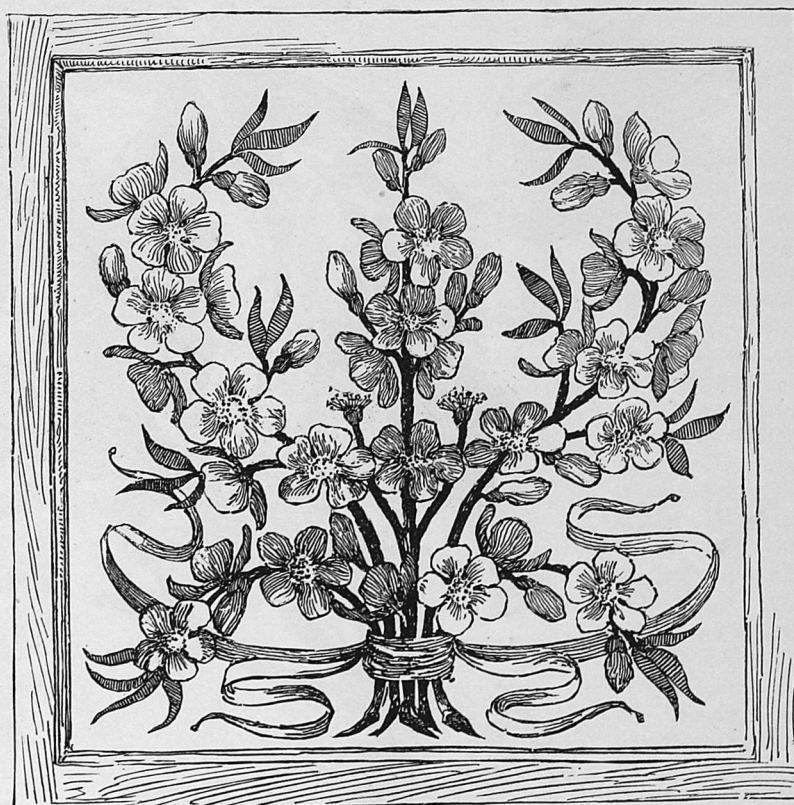
able for a door-panel or a cabinet, a position that would destroy the beauty of the first because of the ever-changing light that would be thrown upon it.

It will be seen that I am not pleading for strict conventionality such as was employed in Egyptian and other historic styles. In work of a pretentious character this is quite in place, as in the sketch of an ornamented doorway on the opposite page. Here the foliage in the frieze over the doorway is treated in the Italian manner and the plant forms are highly conventionalized. The acanthus leaves around the lower part of the columns, in the capitals and in the panels below, are all subjected to the most severe treatment. For simpler work, however, and in the every-day living-rooms of our houses, I prefer to use plant forms in a much more free and natural manner, as most of the sketches accompanying these articles will show. This may seem a contradiction, but let me state that I am only pleading for a little more thought and study in the use of floral decoration. If the principles of composition received more attention from the large body of amateurs who paint flower designs, the result of their labors would be much more satisfactory. I would have each bit of decoration look as if it had been "thought out"—designed for the position it is to occupy. The oft-repeated "bunch of flowers" is not enough—there must be arrangement and composition. This is by no means sure to give a stiff and formal result, especially if the flower and leaf forms themselves are painted in rather a naturalistic way, and only the general scheme of the design—the skeleton, as it were—subjected to a geometric or studied treatment.

For ornamentation we turn naturally to flowers and plants, from which inexhaustible source we seek to draw inspiration. Not alone are there innumerable varieties of plant life to assist us, but each plant of each variety



NATURALISTIC TREATMENT. ALMOND BLOSSOMS.



SEMI-CONVENTIONAL TREATMENT. ALMOND BLOSSOMS.

and may suit his fancy in the selection of his subject. His domain extends over all nature. But there are preliminary questions for him to decide. "What method shall I pursue?" he has to ask himself again and again. If there were but a single path to follow, the undertaking would be a simple one after the technical difficulties were once overcome, but an alternative presents itself at every step. "Shall I conventionalize plant forms, and, if so, wholly or in part?" "Is a simple, honest transcript of natural forms picturesque, or must art play its part to

best light and position that the room affords, and should not be relegated to fill some obscure corner which would be as well supplied by such a panel as the second. This shows an artificial or conventional arrangement of the same plant forms, and could be painted in monochrome and still be pleasing, because of its unpretentious qualities. As a rule such a decoration will be more attractive if the flowers are painted in a pretty close imitation of nature and the conventionality confined to the general outline and the background. Such a painting is suit-

offers in itself many suggestions of color and form. Choice soon bewilders us, for we find that no two leaves on the same stem are identical in shape and color, and if we pause to reason it out—which is doubtful—we find that we have absorbed not the exact shape and color of the flower or leaf, but an impression of the whole, and from that impression we work out our own idea.

Decorative paintings that may be hung as pictures or other works of art are a delightful theme upon which to enlarge, and to suggest what is possible in this way with

the commonest material, I have made a couple of sketches which show in a simple and picturesque way what can be done with an apple-bough or a cluster of larch sprays. Such a study as the apples, if painted in varying tones of green upon a gold or dull yellow background, and framed in oak or ash as shown, gives a unique decoration for a dusky corner, a position over a low bookcase or across a chimney-breast. The other sketch is designed to fill an upright position, to be hung between two windows or near some strong light, which would injure a more delicate coloring; for the pine-needles and cones, if minute in themselves, are neverthe-

been used for the purpose of which I speak. Another was as follows, and it would make a delightful frieze for a library or sitting-room, the eight lines being quite enough to form the substance for the four sides of the room:

“Oh for a booke and a shadie nooke
Eyther in doore or out;
With the grene leaves whispering overhede,
Or the streete cryes all about,
Where I maie reade all at my ease
Both of the newe and olde:
For a jollie goode booke whereon to looke,
Is better to me than golde.”

Heine contributes many an exquisite bit, if one will use the German language. But the translations are not, as a rule, very satisfactory. The following, however, is delicious, and would be a great addition to any room if it were suitably painted:

“Outside fall the snow-flakes lightly,
Through the night loud raves the storm;
In my room the fire glows brightly,
And 'tis cosy, silent, warm.”

I have had in mind the use of wooden panels with the lettering only upon them, but there is no reason why the wording of such charming sentiments should not be combined with equally charming floral painting and the two be doubly attractive by the combination.

The panels or friezes may, of course, be of canvas, or painted directly on the plaster, and it will be found that a rather free treatment of the plant forms will be a delightful contrast to the formal, geometric treatment of the letters. ARCHITECT.

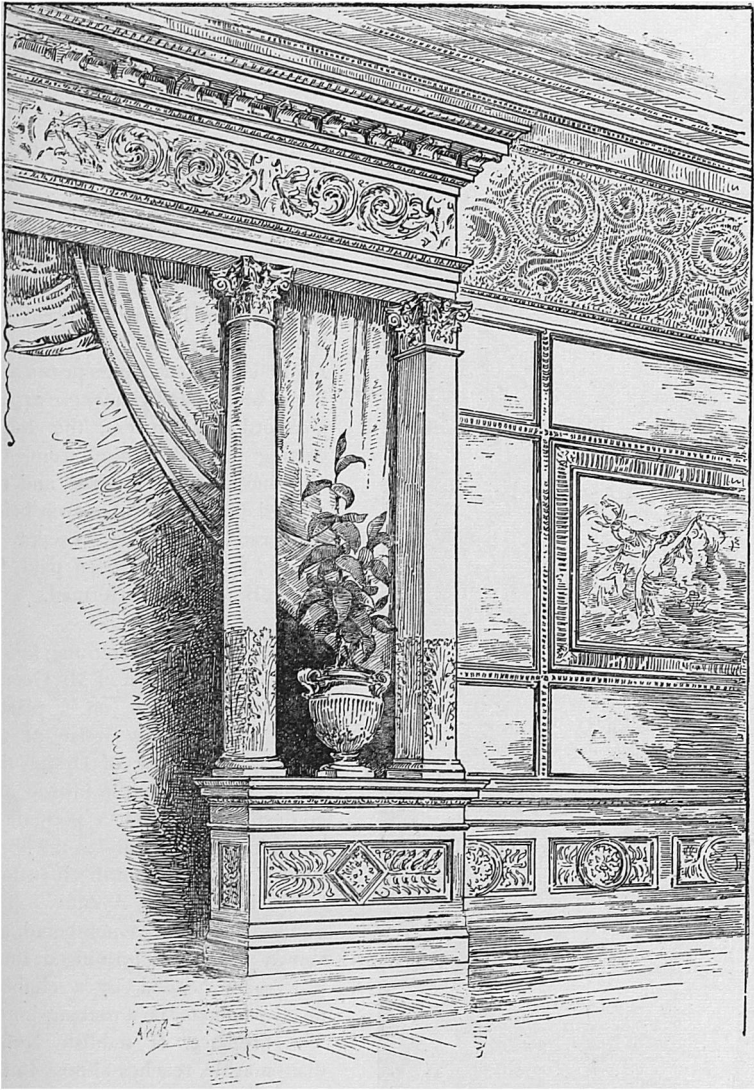
THE GOUPIL HOUSE.

THE late Albert Goupil was known among French collectors as an eclectic. He did not attach himself solely to the Renaissance or the eighteenth century or to Orientalism; but, like most of our American collectors, he took an interest in every kind of art work, whatever the period or the

country. But he exercised a refined taste in bringing together his wonderful collection, which filled his Parisian house in the Rue Chaptal from garret to cellar. This interior was, indeed, a nearly perfect example of that peculiarly modern species of home decoration which has grown out of the taste for antiques and for bric-à-brac. As it has now vanished under the auctioneer's hammer, its component parts having been sold mostly at the Hotel Druot, April 23d-28th, we give an account of it as it was before the sale, believing that it will interest many of our readers.

The bulk of the collection was contained in two large rooms, one consecrated, to use the French expression, to

the Renaissance, the other to the Orient. The wood-work of this latter room was all of Arabic origin, much of it decorated with inlaid geometrical designs in bone instead of ivory. The three doors—the largest, with two leaves—were decorated in this fashion. One of the smaller, being the door through which visitors entered, was further ornamented with a knocker in engraved copper. Six large panels of wood, wrought in geometrical patterns, formed the wainscot of the room, and the dado was made up of large plaques of faïence, with similar



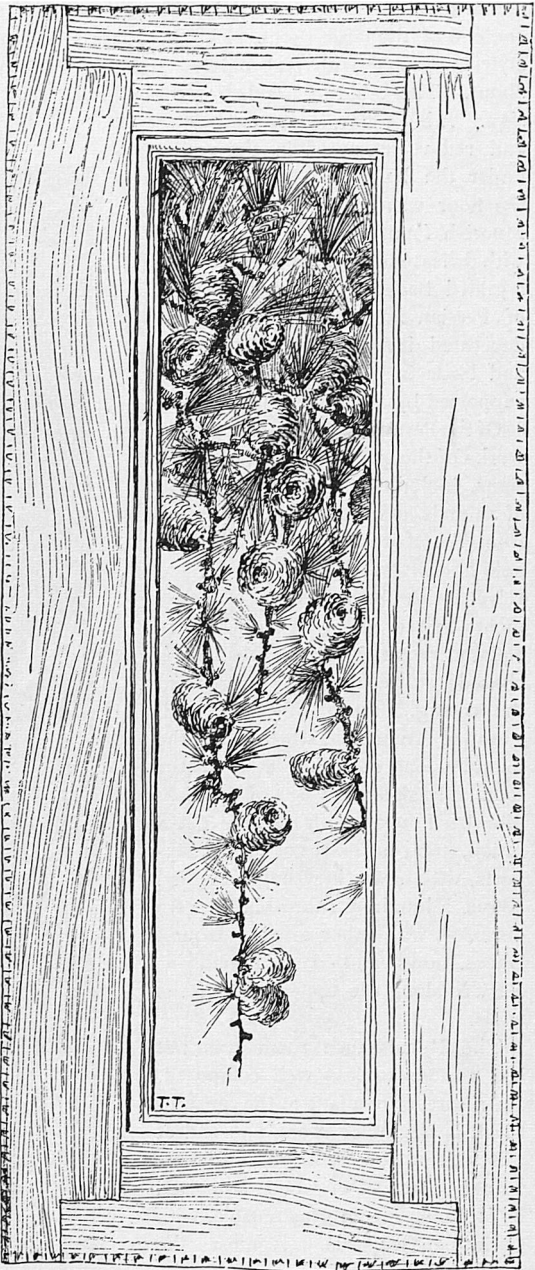
DECORATIVE TREATMENT OF DRAWING-ROOM DOORWAY.

less strong and vigorous in tones of brown and green.

The use of wooden panels, with apt quotations, for hall or dining-room, either painted on or burned into the surface of the wood, has long been held in esteem; but the stock of quotations is limited, and one sees the same old words—undoubtedly charming in themselves—repeated from house to house. In looking over some old books with this in mind, I came upon the following, which may be found useful for decorative purposes:

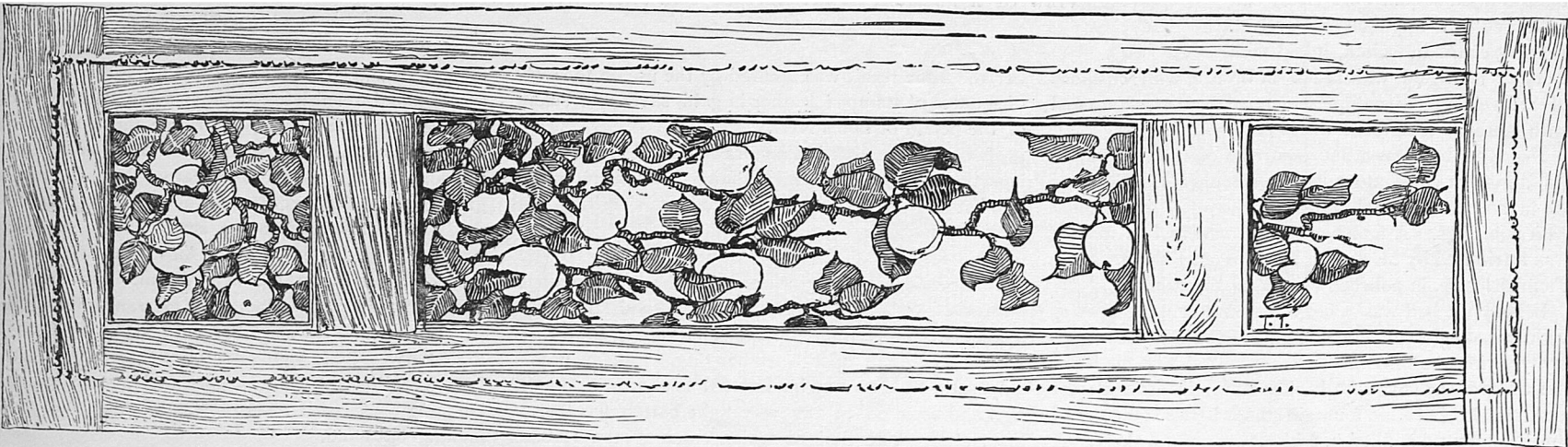
“Old wood to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust and old books to read.”

This is not an unfamiliar quotation, and it may have



DECORATIVE PICTURE AND FRAME.

patterns in open-work, and enamelled blue. Pilasters of various kinds, two in engraved copper, with blackened background, four in black wood, with Indian carvings in wood, and marble for capitals, divided these panels. A great part of one side of the room was taken up by a construction of a monumental aspect, formed principally by two pilasters of black wood decorated with a glass mosaic in colors and gold, which supported two spirally crenellated columns of stone, tinted blue and set with scattered metallic spangles. Large panels of carved wood filled up the space between these columns, and a lambrequin



DECORATIVE PICTURE AND FRAME.

quin of wood cut in open-work patterns finished it at the top. The front wall, at right angles with this, was masked by a meshrebiyeh or balcony of Arab open-work, in wood, ornamented with gildings and plaques of faïence. This, which originally was part of the façade of a Moorish house, made, in its lower part, a little bay or recess, which could be screened off by curtains of Indian stuffs. The upper part was open in the centre to the window, while on either side was a small room with latticed bay windows projecting into the salon.

A divan, with sides and back in rows of wooden colonnades and a cushion of red and blue velvet, stood near one end of the large room. Little tabourets of similar style, cushioned with embroidered stuffs, were scattered about. The tables, ten-sided, were again of similar design. A big coffer, in stamped brass and red velvet, stood in the recess under the balcony. The centre of the floor was occupied by a large Moorish fountain in white marble, with delicate ornaments in relief upon a gilded background, set in a basin of Persian faïence. The bowl was decorated in addition with rosettes and birds in glass mosaic and was supported by a spiral column.

Of the Persian carpets, several were works of the greatest rarity, with designs, including arabesques, figures of animals and flowers, and prayers from the Koran, woven in silk and gold and silver. The portières, in red velvet, with bouquets or compartments in red, green and gold, were equally remarkable. Arab lamps, chased and enamelled, hung from the ceiling. Arab wine-jars, with stamped ornaments, stood facing the fountain, one at either side of the room. Basins and vases of Spanish-Moorish faïence, with metallic decoration, stood on shelves or carved supports, with others in wrought copper. About a hundred sabre-blades were disposed, with other arms—casques, lances, bows, and coats of mail—as a frieze along the upper part of the walls.

The Renaissance room was not less curious or less well composed. As a sort of pendant to the meshrebiyeh in the other room, one end of this was cut off by a great balcony, with balustrades of wood, supported by four columns of gray marble, with Corinthian capitals. Against the middle of this balcony, and over the carved door opening on the hall, was placed a pulpit or tribune, with crenellated pillars and panelled back and front, hung with embroidered velvet. Two elongated sphinxes in wood, on pilasters, panelled and sculptured, supported it. The wall above the balcony was hung with ancient figured tapestry. A great bed, with crenellated columns and a head-board carved with masks and a female head, stood at one end of this balcony, the space under the latter being here shut off by an old iron grille. The curtains and baldaquin were richly embroidered in appliqué on velvet. Folding chairs in walnut, inlaid with ivory or incrustated with reliefs in bronze, with cushions of red velvet or of antique stamped leather, alternated with fauteuils sculptured and decked with fringes.

Near the bed was a fine bas-relief of the Virgin and Child in terra-cotta, attributed to Antonio Rossellino, and set in an architectural frame of gilt wood ornamented with paintings. A fine bust of a man in white marble was attributed by M. Goupil to Mino da Fissole. A big Flemish lustre, in polished copper, lit the chamber.

Behind the bed was a large fifteenth-century tapestry with two allegorical female figures in voluminous drapery typifying the Christian law and faith. The one bears the tables of the law and a broken lance, the other a cross and missal. A Gothic fountain stands between them, and the background is filled in with flowers and leafage. A

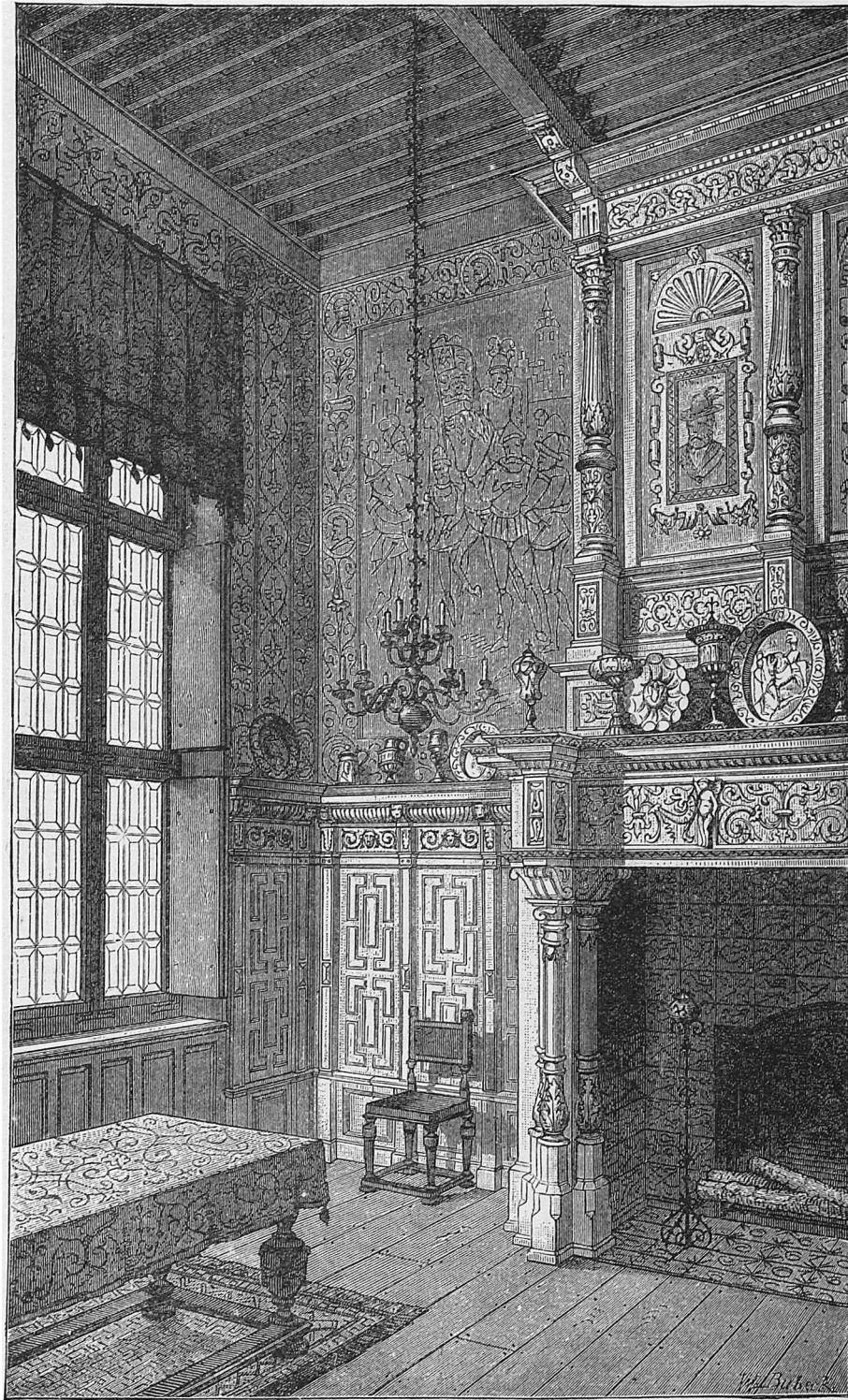
garland of flowers, tied at intervals with interlaced ribbons, forms the border. Cupboards and chests in sculptured oak and walnut supported or contained cofrets in ivory, figures in wood, ivory and hard wax, and other objects.

Elsewhere in the house no particular order was observed in grouping the various works of art, European and Eastern, with which it was completely furnished. Flemish tapestries and Persian carpets, Italian carvings and Moorish inlays, vied with one another in richness and artistic effect. Still, care was taken to secure breadth and unity of impression. The big studio, for instance, crammed with all sorts of things, was "held together" by its hangings of ancient red damask, with large ornaments of flowers, foliage and birds. In the antecham-

may be in gold or in any color that will contrast strongly with the background and harmonize with the ribbons. The borders at top and bottom may be copied directly from the design in dark lines of needlework on the light ground, care being taken to break the lines as shown in the design. If used for a summer cottage, a good range of color would be pale turquoise for the ground, pale sky blue for the ribbons, gold for the ornaments, with the outline work for all parts in indigo.

AN important invention has been patented by Dawson, the picture-frame-maker, for the ivory enamelling of wood and other hard substances. No varnish is used in the process, which is much cheaper, and, it is claimed, much more durable than the tedious process in general use by furniture-makers. Five coats of the mixture are applied, and when it is rubbed down it is no thicker than a sheet of paper; but it dries in about two hours, and then it is so hard that it can hardly be scratched with a steel point. It has been used with very good effect for picture-frames; and, what is more interesting, furniture enamelled by this Dawson process has been sold by certain first-class cabinet-makers at the same prices as if it had been done by the more expensive ordinary process, the buyer getting no advantage from the cheapness of the method, and the reward due the patentee even being deliberately withheld, except, of course, that he has been paid for the work actually performed.

MR. HARTLEY'S charming family group of the children of Mr. George Inness, Jr., shown on a plaster panel in very low relief at the National Academy of Design this spring, has been cast in bronze, and is destined to find a permanent home in the overmantel in the library of Mr. Roswell Smith's luxurious house in Madison Avenue. The figures, it may be remembered, are shown in profile, forming a small procession headed by a chubby-faced youngster on a rocking-horse. The fireplace, of reddish Numidian marble, reaches almost to the cornice, and is set in a mantel of cherry-wood, nearly the natural color, the structure being somewhat of the Colonial order, only rather more severe. The library, with the whole of the decorations of the first floor, we believe, has been done by C. H. George & Co. Warm, tawny red is the prevailing tone. The walls are covered with embossed leather paper of a Renaissance design, glazed with Sienna to harmonize in value with the woodwork; the ceiling, very quietly treated, being kept in the same tone. The window-curtains are very simple, hanging in straight folds from dulled brass poles; the velvet-faced linen fabric has a dark écru ground with a Morris-like design in dull red. The chairs are upholstered



VIEW OF A FLEMISH APARTMENT OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

ber, the same result was secured by the use on the walls of squares of stamped leather in gold, silver and colors, of the period of Louis XIII.

M. Goupil possessed many drawings and some paintings by Ingres, and several paintings by Fortuny, and a number by or attributed to Vandyck, Terburg and other old masters.

THE portière design given on the opposite page should be worked on a light material in very solid stitch or in appliqué of much more opaque material, so as to carry out the idea of an open-work hanging. Silk, or, preferably, satin ribbons may be knotted as shown in the design and sewn on to any very light cotton, woollen or linen stuff. The designs which catch up the ribbons

in soft, stamped mohair plush in Sienna red, dull, amber and brownish olive, the pattern carefully subordinated; and there is a comfortable divan nearly eight feet long, with a sort of mattress seat, and movable cushions at the back. The carpet has a dark blue ground, with a rather Persian design, in the colors of the room. There is only a small book-case, holding books chiefly for reference. Although called the library, this is really the living-room. The place for reading would seem to be on the mezzanine floor, cut off from the first and second floors, breaking the ascent of the otherwise long flights of stairs, and, with a central lounge and plenty of easy-chairs, making a comfortable lounging-place, with rows of well-stocked book-shelves invitingly at hand.